

CITY COLLEGE NEWS

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Teaching or learning? The great debate begins

A great debate is raging across Ontario colleges this spring about teaching and learning.

On one side of this increasingly heated debate are college administrators and other staff who advocate a new approach to education that is learning-centered. They say the focus should be on learning that students could acquire by a number of means besides traditional classroom or lab sessions directed by a teacher. This could mean students would spend more time more than they do now in self-directed or technology-assisted learning — using computer programs, for example.

On the other side of the debate are teachers and other staff who say that reducing the proportion of teaching could lower the quality of education in colleges and make it difficult for many students to succeed. They also see this philosophical shift as a thinly-disguised justification for cost-cutting and elimination of teaching jobs by cash-strapped colleges.

The debate was sparked by the release of a discussion paper distributed by the Ontario Council of College Presidents and published by the Association of Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology of Ontario late in 1995.

The core of that 12-page paper, called Learning-centered Education in Ontario's Colleges, are the following two sections:

"Teaching-Centered Education

Ontario's colleges of applied arts and technology have two key reasons for success: career-oriented, "applied" education; and effective, classroom-based teaching. Asked about the strengths of their college experience, students and graduates repeatedly cite these points. This is neither a ritual acknowledgment nor a trivial asset; success in education depends on the good teaching and positive relationships between students and teachers.

Yet, as do most successful organizations, colleges have enshrined our source of success and accordingly constrained our creativity in program design, description of work, roles and relationships, planning and responses to financial pressures. Consider how we have designed our programs. In post-secondary education, most consist of semes-

ter-long subjects taught within specified weekly hours. Students are grouped into classes (often termed "sections") and moved through the majority of their subjects, in theory, together. Subjects and sections are assigned to professors who prepare classes, teach them and evaluate the students. In this model, apart from pay, the primary cost of variables associated directly with the teaching and learning are the numbers of hours in a program and the number of students in a class.

Our historical assumptions about teaching and learning have also, quite naturally, guided our descriptions of faculty work. We have focused on the professor's individual responsibility for subjects and sections. Consequently, factors such as preparation for assigned classes and evaluation of each group of students are the central means through which we describe faculty work.

At the same time, we have also adopted equations between roles and types of work. We have two "classes" of faculty involved in teaching and learning. Professors are responsible for the full range of preparation, teaching, and evaluation. Instructors carry out high restrictive work; in fact, so restrictive that they are rarely found at all. Under this system, the classification of professor is tied to the person and work tends to planned, describe and carried out accordingly. Similarly, the role of staff associated with the programs usually forces on "support" including maintenance of laboratories and equipment, with little or no involvement in the teaching and learning process.

Our assumptions also affect our approach to planning. Traditionally, the Chair or Dean, having the primary responsibility for budget, endeavors to make assignments to faculty in the most cost effective manner possible. Professors, concerned with teaching, have no prescribed responsibility to find the most cost effective learning strategies or resources. Although between them they have all of the information necessary to make the best possible decisions for the program, they have traditionally not collaborated in the decision-making process.

This decision about the char-

Continued on page 4.



A STUDY IN STUDYING — Human Resources Management student Nicole Stauder cracks the books in the St. James Learning Resource Centre (also known as the library). She's working on an organizational behavior course. "It's a fair bit of studying," she says. This is time of year when studying takes on new importance with paper and project deadlines looming and exams not too far in the future.

Income-contingent loan repayment has some pitfalls, says researcher

At first glance the idea seems so reasonable and humane: people would be able repay their student loans as they are able, so graduates with lower incomes would make lower loan payments.

But income-contingent loan repayment, as this proposed system is called, may be a hidden trap for some people who could spend most of their working lives paying off student loans, according to a University of Toronto researcher and activist.

Stacey Young, who is also editor of the Varsity newspaper at U of T, told a recent forum on education at George Brown that stretching out loan repayment periods by making small monthly payments will create an increasingly large debt because of accumulated interest on the loan.

"If you get stuck in a mediocre-paying job you'll be paying till you're 100," she said.

Income-contingent loan repayment, which is currently being considered by governments in Ottawa and Queen's Park, could also discriminate against women and scare off some newcomers to post-secondary education, she says.

While the system would defer loan repayments for women who decided to stop working to care

for their children, interest could continue to be applied so they would face an even larger debt load, she says.

The system, with its potential for higher long-term costs for people, could be enough to persuade some people that the investment of time and money in education wasn't worth it, Young says.

"Not everyone has at their disposal the evidence that such an investment will yield results," she said.

This would be particularly true for people from working-class backgrounds who see no evidence for the benefits of a college or university education among their friends and family, she said.

By scaring off potential students of this type, the government would be harming one of the benefits of post-secondary education in our society — economic and social class mobility, Young said.

Income-contingent loan repayment is one way that the Ontario Government is dealing with its own financial problems, she says.

Students are paying more of the cost of their education and even assuming long-term debt that would have been assumed by

the public in the past.

"The province is simply off-loading the debt onto individuals," Young said.

George Brown Student Assistance Office manager Audrey Albert says that governments appear to be serious in their desire to switch to loan income-contingent repayment in the near future.

"It looks like it might become a reality in the next couple of years," she says.

Currently graduates have eight years to repay their student loans, but can apply for and get "interest-relief" for up to the first 18 months after graduation.

About 75 per cent of all post-secondary students at George Brown get student loans, and the college's Financial Assistance Office handled about \$30 million in loans last year, Albert says.

Because of a loan forgiveness program currently in effect, students are forgiven loan amounts over \$6,000 a year — so the most a graduate of a two-year program would repay in principal is \$12,000.

Interest on the Canadian government portion of a loan is prime rate plus four to seven per cent, while the Ontario portion is prime plus one per cent.

Pretty spicy St. Valentine's dessert wins

A recipe competition made St. Valentine's Day even sweeter for Hospitality Centre student Gurth Pretty.

February 14 was the day he took top honours in an industry-sponsored dessert contest with his Spiced Kiwi Berry Tuile Tower.

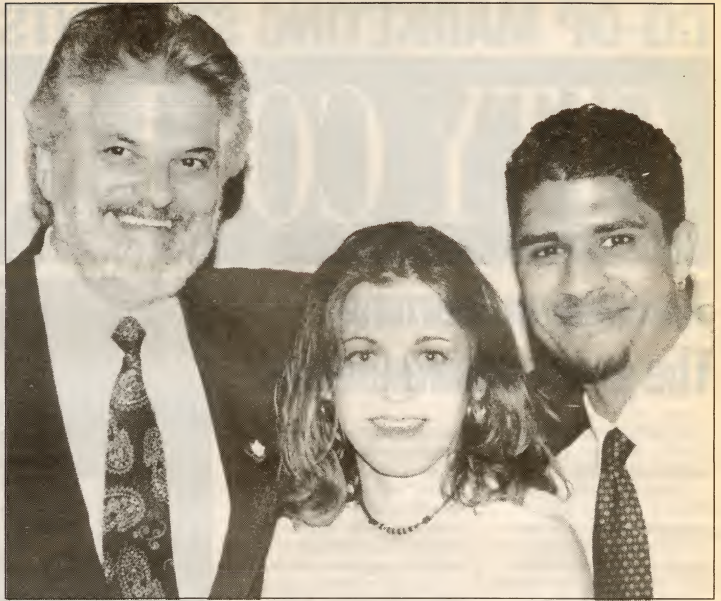
Pretty won \$500 and some public exposure — his dessert was to be featured as a display item in the front window of the Dufflet Pastries shop in March.

The Tuile Tower is a lavish combination of cream, kiwi fruit and strawberries spiced with ginger, cinnamon, and cardamom — but if your Valentine is a weight watcher he or she may not appreciate it.

It also includes a litre of 35 per cent butter fat cream, and 180 grams of butter.

Pretty, who is enrolled in the Culinary Management program, is president of the Junior Escoffier Society (the college chapter of the professional cooks' society) but he was a winner in a menu writing competition at the Blue Begonia Restaurant in the fall of 1995.

In second place in the Sugar and Spice Baking competition was student Kenneth Wu, who created Sugar and Spice Genoise Torte. Third came Laura Sangalli, who made Poached Pears with Champagne Zabaglione.



ATHLETES OF THE YEAR - George Brown president Frank Sorochinsky (left) poses with Maria Gothard and Alex Liguori, who were named athletes of the year at the

recent athletic awards banquet. Gothard, who is a dental student, played intersvarsity soccer and volleyball. Liguori, a marketing student, played intersvarsity soccer.

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LETTERS

Workfare etc, etc.

To the Editor,
Wouldn't it be really interesting if in this government was making these huge province-wide cuts so that corporations and institutions would be forced to lay off thousands of people on purpose. People would be left with no choice but to fall back on the now ineffective and useless welfare systems (U.I. does run out!)

The province goes into complete and utter chaos. In the middle of the chaos, when people are dying and starving to death and crime is escalating, the Mike Harris government then steps forward to offer salvation.

What they're going to offer the

people of this province is a chance for a better life by introducing work fare.

Now you can work for less than minimum wage to supplement your tiny welfare income. You can go back to work and get paid less than an employee of your own company was paid 20 years ago. Isn't that great. You'll feel great that you can work for a living. No they are not going to be offering any more skills training programs, they don't want you to become successful, they want you to work for them not in competition with them. They want big business to profit from cheap slave labour so they can all live in castles on top of the hill

and look down on us hard working poor starving, but humble individuals who won't have the energy to fight.

And do you know what is sad? It will work. The uninformed will think that Mike Harris has seen the light. They will see his new vision as compromise. They will think that Mike is listening to the cries of the people.

What they won't see is Mike and all his corporate buddies wallowing in champagne and feeding what is remaining of the left wing advocated to the alligators that swim in moats that surround their castles.

Jaqueline Perras,
Nightingale Campus

...her fingers danced across his skin,
then she felt his ACNE.



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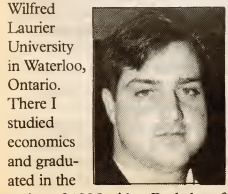
Marketing program opens doors from baseball to Bay Street

Call it Networking 101. Marketing students at George Brown have to find their own co-op placement in the final year of the three-year program to get their diplomas. In today's constrained job market, finding that unpaid position is an exercise in persuasion, self-marketing, and networking — but it pays off. This spring students are doing everything from helping research the habits of consumers for a financial institution to kicking off the Blue Jays' baseball season in Las Vegas. City College News asked two of these students to write about their experiences and what they see for their futures:

Chris Smith: Let's Play Ball!

"I grew up in Barrie, Ontario and knew right from the start I wanted to get into Business, although I was not sure of how or where I wanted to be. After graduating from St. Joseph's High School in the spring of 1992, I moved on to Wilfred Laurier University in Waterloo, Ontario. There I studied economics and graduated in the spring of 1995 with a Bachelor of Arts, with a major in Economics and a minor in Finance Accounting.

I then found myself, like thousands of other young men and women across Ontario, with a degree, no real work experience, and a mounting debt load. I had two choices. Either I could try to get and work my way up, working for nothing and hopefully get a better job after a couple of years or I could look into more education, making myself more attractive to companies. I choose the latter. The next decision I had to make was where would I go to school. I knew I wanted to get into the business world but I was not sure where. I looked around at different University and College post-degree courses and some first year courses. Not many caught my eye. I didn't want to start all over again in first year college. One school I talked to said that they did not give exemptions to transfer students. That would mean I would have to take courses in first year economics! I obviously did not feel that this was what I wanted to do. The only course that stood out to me was the third-year Marketing course, here at George Brown College. There was two things that caught my eye. First, they gave me credit for the work I did at University, as I started right into third year of the program. Second, the course offers a parallel internship. That means that I could go to school for two and a half days and work at a real job for two and a half days. This



was the main reason why I came to George Brown.

When the course began in September, I immediately went looking for a job. I landed a job with a company called Sports & Entertainment Inc. They are a full service publishing company that works mainly in the sports and entertainment fields. I was one of the lucky ones in my class to actually land a position in the sports marketing field that was a paying position. For a course at school, I am responsible for writing a marketing plan on one of the products that the company has to offer. That takes up about a half day. The rest of the time I am responsible for a number of other things. I have been in charge with the planning, organization and running of our client movie nights. I help support the sales staff with the materials needed on their sales calls. I help out with the contests in which we run and fill in where necessary. Recently, I went to Las Vegas for the Toronto Blue Jays pre-season games. Sports & Entertainment Inc., along with Baton Broadcasting Systems(BBS), took approximately 60 clients down. I was in charge of assisting in the running of all events, which included three baseball games, a client softball game, two rounds of golf and a meet the Blue Jays cocktail party. This was a big responsibility for a student(as the President of Sports & Entertainment could not be there), but it proved to be a major help both in experience and meeting people in the business world.

From here, I am looking to get into the field of sports marketing. I feel that the experiences that George Brown was able to offer me has advanced me in the job seeking world. I believe that I now have what any employer wants, thanks to GBC. I have a university degree, a college diploma and 8 months of real and relevant working experience. I feel a lot better now, a year later, about my future in the working world."

Solomon Amos: Bay Street Bound

"The primary goal in my youth was to become a architect. After several years in the drafting, math and science area I decided that this would be a viable career



GETTING DOWN TO BUSINESS - Graduating business students (left) chat with Fortune Financial president David Singh (right) after a recent students awards luncheon where Singh was keynote speaker. Rumours

circulated at the event that Singh, a George Brown graduate who is on the Board of Governors, was looking for some new employees for his financial services company. Singh spoke about business relationships.

choice. However in 1992, a year and a half into the GBC architecture program, numerous architecture firms closed in Toronto and there seemed to be no future demand for my skills. After achieving the English award for communication, I quickly enrolled in the winter Business Marketing program with higher hopes for the future. Soon, I felt comfortable with the knowledge and skills I was learning. Marketing and Advertising seemed to be an area that I excelled at. A year later



I decided to get more involved with the school, I joined the Marketing Club and became an AMA member. At the same time I was asked to represent George Brown in the 1994 Ontario Colleges Marketing Competition where myself and classmates, ranked in the top five out of twenty-five in the problem solving category. Long-term I wanted to obtain a degree in business and possibly a MBA. This lead me to enrol in the third year marketing program which included a placement program for two and a half days a week.

Coming from a family where my mother was an employee of a major financial institution and myself being a satisfied customer, I set my sights on achieving a placement with it. Knowing that they could offer ample resources, experience and a future, I persisted in my quest. At first I called the bank's main directory hoping to reach some area of marketing.

After fifteen minutes of "run-around" I decided to start over. This time I reached a person in marketing, who then went on to explain that this institution did not take on "co-op" students. I was disappointed but not discouraged.

Then I found out that my father had sat next to a women from the marketing research customer segmentation department on a plane the year before. My mother found the business card she had given him and I called her and got an interview. Two days later I was granted a paid placement in the marketing research sector.

Currently my job title is market research associate. It consists of being the primary on several projects, generating questionnaires, analyzing results from primary research and producing summary reports of secondary market information. The amount of practical experience I have gained with the bank in such a short period is tremendous. This includes, building customer relationships, dealing with difficult deadlines, leading several projects

at the same time, and exposure to new computer software and applications.

In addition to this, working for a large organization during the placement has several advantages including, the availability of resources. For example, as a benefit of my position I receive an office(with a view), a laptop computer, voice mail, and several peripherals including fax machine and photocopier. Furthermore, I receive an employee discount on my regular banking fees and use the banks extensive library.

Recently, I was approached by my manager from the customer service section on whether I would be interested in working full-time with her in developing different company manuals and customer service side of business. The same day I was offered a full-time position with the marketing research section which I eventually decided on.

My future plans include achieving a degree in business and working towards an MBA while working with the bank or on my own business titled Venture Marketing."

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The Great debate: teaching and technology

Continued from page 1.

teristics of teaching-centered education would not be complete without considering the question:

What problems arise as a result of these assumptions and decisions about planning, design, roles, and nature of work and how have they impacted on our ability to respond to financial pressures?

Given our assumptions, our responses to decreasing funds have been fairly predictable and usually classroom-based. The predominant practice is for the chair to make assignments to faculty according to current parameters on a subject-by-subject and professor-by-professor basis. Since, as we have noted, the obvious variables have been number of program/teaching hours, preparation, number of students, and type of teacher-based evaluation, the "solutions" to decreased funding have frequently been fewer program hours and more students per class. With no other change, this is not a recipe for maintenance of quality. Continued reliance on these variables leads to inevitable decline in quality and eventually threat to program sustainability.

At the same time, our current tools for describing and measuring faculty work assume that student contact involves direct, face-to-face teaching, that all teaching involves preparation and evaluation, that preparation is linked directly to the professor's assigned subjects, and that evaluation is linked automatically to the professor's own assigned students. We have developed no clear, agreed-upon way to describe contact with students that is not classroom-based. We have no way to accommodate curriculum preparation and packaging into the media-rich units by one curriculum expert for use by others; nor have we adequate description of work when evaluation involves markers or computer-generated feedback directly to students. More importantly, the equation of program and teaching hours has made it difficult to focus on the achievement of learning outcomes rather than the time spent in class.

Similarly, even though there is a wealth of established curriculum both internally developed and commercially available, and technologically-mediated materials are readily accessible in many areas, we do not have adequate means to deal with the range of roles that can be carried out in these circumstances, including work in which preparation relates less to individual "sections" and more to overall selection, development and coordination of shared learning materials. Nor do we have sufficient means to recognize that, increasingly, each faculty member carries out a mixture of responsibilities—some more consistent with the definition of

a professor; others more consistent with that of an instructor; still others well beyond the individual, section-oriented responsibility.

A Learning-Centered Approach To Education

Will there be adequate funding in the future for colleges to teach students? With traditional practices alone, the answer is probably no. Yet this may be the wrong question, focused by the lens of traditional practices. We could ask instead: Can we redesign a college education so that there is adequate funding for effective student learning?

This redesign begins with learning outcomes. It requires a different use of time, resources and space. It involves new means to maintain student/faculty relationships while shifting much greater responsibility to the learner.

Traditionally, students are "graded" at the end of the semester. A learning-centered education might deal where possible with learning outcomes that can be demonstrated whenever the learner is ready. A student doesn't "take" Microcomputer Applications, particularly if she can demonstrate competence with the learning outcomes after only the fifth—not the fifteenth—week of study. Similarly, a student already proficient in four of the six components of Business Mathematics might learn the other two through working in a learning center. Once again, the "subject" is as long as is needed, not as long as the semester. Prior learning assessment is not a separate activity oriented to the subject "credit"; it is woven into the student's learning experience.

In this environment, time changes. The "timetable" is less of a regime than it once was. There are fewer scheduled "class" hours; students use the college's learning centers at any time of the day and any time of the week. Similarly, traditional semester dates takes on less importance. A student completing a specific learning outcome can work ahead, concentrate on weaknesses, or pursue other priorities. Within the year, traditional subject sequences (first and second semester; first and second year) become less a function of program organization and more a function of learner needs and priorities. Whereas students were once perceived to go "off-stream" (thereby inconveniencing everybody), the streams are now individual.

Time also changes in a second significant way. The task was once to place knowledge into subjects and a sequence it appropriately over the weeks and semesters of the program. The challenge to the learner was to demonstrate recall of the information through a cumulative examination. In a learning-centered environment, materials and resources to assist the learner in

acquiring learning outcomes are available when the learner requires them through use of a variety of media. Assessment then focuses more on the performance of the tasks and less on summary examinations.

A learning-centered education requires new and different resources. Classroom teaching remains vital, though it is less frequently the means to transmit information.

A learning-centered education requires new and different resources.... Professors are complemented by technologies, peer tutors and fellow students... the college learning environment becomes more like the workplace with students collaborating to solve problems and to apply their learning.

becomes more like the workplace with students collaborating to solve problems and to apply their learning.

This learning environment also thrives on technology-based resources. CD-ROM-based courses, tutorial software, computerized testing, hypertext, Internet-based courses, interactive video materials and simulation software all provide learning materials that cannot be developed on a classroom-by-classroom, professor-by-professor basis. New resources are not teacher "substitutes"; they are the raw materials for a new educational design.

This design also requires a new use of space. Learning shifts from classroom to the library, the learning centre, the information commons—whatever environment we create to bring learners and resources together. At the same time, both the classroom

and the learning centre become virtual environments, accessed from the learner's home or workplace.

Do these changes diminish the professor/student relationship? Although they could, students want and need that relationship, and the faculty role in learning is a keystone in a college education with dimension and depth. Yet in a different environment, these relationships must be nurtured in different ways—often over time and distance and through electronic means.

Looking at this picture from a

learner's perspective, education changes significantly. It is no longer as timetable- or classroom-based. It is a set of varied learning resources and

opportunities that demand far more than just memorizing or even synthesizing what is taught. In the traditional environment, we have indirectly sent a different message. In a learning-centered medium, the message is larger responsibility and the implicit objective of lifelong learning moves from the mission statement to the essence of program, resource and campus design.

In this environment, professors' roles expand and contract. They expand with respect to program planning and management; they contract with respect to class preparation, teaching and evaluation. Planning requires selection and development of complementary learning resources such as those listed below:

- Technologists who assist student learning, particularly for skills-based subjects

- Peer tutors who give individual assistance in learning centres and laboratories

- Technology-based resources, including CD-ROM courseware, software-based tutorials, college and university materials available via the Internet

- Training materials developed by business and industry, often leading to external accreditation (e.g. Microsoft and Novell courseware)

- Resources from other CAAT's, including live and taped sessions by "master teachers"

- Multimedia resources for large-group sessions

- Collaborative learning designed to emphasized student team development

- Test centres used for both traditional and open entry/open exit subjects

- Nontraditional learning environments (e.g. an information commons in which self-paced learning is supported by faculty-led teams including technologies and peer tutors)

As these resources are developed and adopted, new roles also emerge. With more laboratory- and computer-based subjects, and with more independently-accessed learning materials, there is an increasing role for those who will monitor student learning and provide a tutorial function. These individuals do not necessarily have to be professor or even instructors. It may well be support staff at the technologist level who will be increasingly and more directly involved in supporting student learning.

Thus from every perspective—student, professor, chair and support staff—the shift to a learning-centered environment challenges, traditional assumptions and requires us to paint a new picture of what could be. The new picture has familiar landmarks, but unfamiliar roles and responsibilities."

What do you think about the ideas in this discussion paper? Write a letter to City College News and share your reaction and your thoughts.

IMPORTANT OSAP NOTICE

Attention all returning students in the following programs:

- Nursing
- Community Services
- All Casa Loma Campus programs

As part of a pilot project, and in an attempt to offer improved service, the Financial Assistance Office will be mailing out the 1996/97 Canada and Ontario student loan documents for September to returning students in the programs listed above.

The documents will be mailed directly to the address on the OSAP application and the pre-prints, starting in mid-August.

If your address has changed, please ensure that you leave a change-of-address notice with the post office.

Contact the Financial Assistance Office if you have any questions or concerns.

Financial Assistance Office, Student Affairs Department